

'New Look' Wanderers

Line-Up Flops And Ilford Kill A Bogey

BY 'NOVA'

Wycombe Wanderers 2;

Ilford 3

MORE than a quarter-of-a-century of Wycombe domination over Ilford at Loakes Park came to an inglorious end on Saturday when the Londoners pounded their way to an historic single-goal victory, their first away from home this season.

It was way back in 1935 that Ilford last felt the flush of success at Wycombe. But if the much-changed Wanderers in their smart new light and dark blue stripes, were relying on the bogey to pull them through on Saturday they were sadly disillusioned. Not even a rousing second half rally, after an insipid performance in the first period, could peg back the Ilford lead.

The rights or wrongs of coach Don Welsh's decision to bring in Pete Sewell, John Cooper and Les Merrick were being argued by supporters long after the game had finished. But it would be hard to blame any of the three for the defeat. Sewell showed great commonsense throughout, although sometimes beaten for sheer speed, while Cooper came into his own in the second half. Merrick took longer to show his talents but in the last 15 minutes he appeared to have gained enough confidence to run with the ball.

TWO UP

In the first half there was marked lack of understanding in the Wanderers' defence—and it was usually not the youngsters who made mistakes, but performers like Pullin, Roystone and Thomas.

Wycombe were perhaps fortunate Ilford did not take greater advantage of the uncertainty. As it was, they scored only two goals before the interval, both from right-winger Armstrong—the first after 25 minutes, with a shot that bounced awkwardly over the hands of goalkeeper Phil Patrick, and the second five minutes later, when Pullin made a sorry mess of a clearance.

The two-goal lead at the interval could have been so much more, for the three inside-forwards all squandered easy chances. Patrick, back in the senior ranks again, helped to baulk them with a series of daring dives.

While Ilford were pounding away in the first half Wycombe's attack was made to look even less effective than usual. Only Hodges seemed to know the way to goal. The trouble lay largely with the inside-forwards. Neither Horseman nor Merrick seemed inclined to link up with Cooper

or Thomas, and Balson rarely seemed in the right spot at the right time.

Yet despite it all, Wycombe might have gone in at half-time only a goal down. Hodges shot a free-kick into the net with the help of a deflection, only for the referee to disallow it. Apparently he thought the indirect free-kick went straight into the net, touching only an upright.

Responding to a stern interval homily by Don Welsh, the Wanderers were a different outfit in the second half. Horseman showed all the elusiveness that has made him such a favourite with the crowd. Cooper came into his own and Sewell, Pullin and Thomas all moved up in close support of their forwards.

STILL MENACING

Although this enabled Wycombe to do most of the attacking and narrow the lead through Balson, after a great weaving run by Horseman, Ilford still looked dangerous in breakaways. Centre-forward Alf Christmas, constantly jostling Wycombe's latest captain, Roystone, laid on a chance for Rutter, who headed against the post with the goal at his mercy. Then Rutter got the ball in again, only for a colleague to be caught offside.

But five minutes after Balson's goal Rutter increased Ilford's lead with a somewhat debatable goal. He appeared to push Dave Thomas in the ribs during a sprint from the half-way line and when Thomas fell flat Rutter had an easy task to push the ball past Patrick. Within a minute, however, Wycombe hit back again when Horseman scored his eleventh goal of the season with a header from a Worley cross.

With the floodlights on and the crowd forgetting their earlier shouts of derision, the fight was really on. But an all-out final quarter-of-an-hour failed to bring the equaliser as Ilford packed their goal.

Wycombe—P. Patrick; P. Sewell, G. Pullin; D. Thomas, P. Roystone, J. Cooper; L. Worley, L. Merrick, J. Balson, T. Horseman, P. Hodges.